## Aff Answers to Japan DA

### No Link—Engagement Key

#### No allied support for containment

Friedberg, PhD Harvard, 15

(Aaron L, Prof of Politics and international affairs @Princeton, The Debate Over US China

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Elsewhere in the world, although concern over China is growing, there is no appetite for a full-blown rivalry. Aside from bigger defence budgets and less trade and investment, a shift toward containment would provoke fears of war. All parties would suffer in such a conflict, but China’s Asian neighbours have reason to fear that they would suffer more than most. Even if American strategists concluded that it was necessary, the democratic countries that are its principal strategic partners in Asia are simply not ready to abandon engagement and sign on to a policy of containment. (107)

### Turn—Cooperation

#### Cooperation with china is key to overall relations with east Asian allies—flips abandonment worries.

Swaine, PhD Harvard, 15

(Michael D, expert in China and East Asian security studies and a Senior Associate in the Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/04/20/beyond-american-predominance-in-western-pacific-need-for-stable-u.s.-china-balance-of-power/i7gi>, 4-20)

These obstacles clearly indicate that Washington and Beijing are not about to undertake, much less reach, a formal grand bargain type of agreement to establish a new regional security environment anytime soon.4 Such a fundamental shift in policies and approaches can only occur gradually, in stages, and over an extended period of time. But it can only begin if elites in Washington, Beijing, and other Asian capitals seriously examine the enduring trends under way in Asia and accept the reality of the changing power distribution and the need for more than just marginal adjustments and assurances. Only then will they undertake a systematic examination of the requirements of a stable balance of power over the long term, involving a serious consideration of the more fundamental actions. Such an examination and acceptance must initially occur domestically, then among allies and protectorates, and finally via a bilateral U.S.China strategic dialogue aimed at developing understandings about the process and actions required. Such understandings must provide for ample opportunities and means for both sides to assess and evaluate the credibility and veracity of the actions of the other side. If such understandings can be reached regarding the overall need for strategic adjustment, then the specific concessions to minimize potential instabilities and arrangements for meaningful cooperation, involving Korea, Taiwan, and maritime issues within the first island chain, will become much more possible. In particular, a strategic understanding designed to achieve a peaceful and stable transition to a genuine balance of power in the Western Pacific could make Beijing more likely to pressure or entice North Korea to abandon or place strong limits on its nuclear weapons program and undertake the kind of opening up and reforms that would almost certainly result eventually in a unified peninsula. While difficult to envision at present, such a shift in Chinese policy is certainly possible, given the obvious incentives to do so. While South Korea might also resist movement toward a nonaligned status in a postunification environment, the obvious benefits that would result from a stable balance of power, if presented properly, could very likely overcome such resistance. Regarding Taiwan, if both U.S. and Chinese leaders can convince Taipei of the benefits of the kind of mutual assurances and restraints necessary to neutralize the crossstrait issue, none of which require the U.S. abandonment of the island, these possible adverse outcomes of the proposed or ongoing shift, including any resort to nuclear weapons, would almost certainly be avoided. As for Japan and the U.S.Japan alliance, in the past, many observers viewed a muchstrengthened alliance and a stronger Japan as either a major provocation to Beijing not worth the cost or as a largely unfeasible option for Tokyo, given domestic political and economic constraints. However, as with the Taiwan and Korea cases, if viewed as a requirement for the creation of a bufferlike arrangement basic to a stable balance of power in the first island chain, and if limited in scope and purpose, such a calibrated strengthening would almost certainly prove acceptable to Beijing, and eventually necessary for Tokyo, particularly considering the unpalatable alternatives. Unfortunately, there is no magic formula or technique that will guarantee or facilitate the transition to a new security environment based on a stable balance of power. It will require courageous and farsighted leadership in all relevant capitals, some significant risk taking (especially in the domestic political arena), and highly effective diplomacy. But the alternative, involving current attempts to sustain American predominance in the Western Pacific while muddling through by managing various frictions with Beijing in a piecemeal and incremental manner and cooperating where possible, will likely prove disastrous. And a much delayed attempt to transition to a more stable balance, perhaps as a result of a clear failure of the existing strategy, will simply make the process more difficult. Ultimately, the choice facing policymakers in the United States, China, and other Asian powers is whether to deal forthrightly and sensibly with the changing regional power distribution or avoid the hard decisions that China’s rise poses until the situation grows ever more polarized and dangerous. There are no other workable alternatives.

### Japan Won’t Prolif

#### No scenario for Japanese Prolif – the costs are too high

Tatsumi et al, Stimson Center East Asia Program Senior Associate, 14

(Yuki and Henry Stimson, Naval Post Graduate School Lecturer, “Political Influence on Japanese Nuclear and Security Policy”, DOA: 9-21-15,

Abe has also forthrightly pushed to bring Japan’s nuclear reactors back on line, and has aggressively pushed for the export of nuclear power technology, including to aspiring nuclear-weapon power India. By the end of February 2014, Abe had gone so far as to announce a draft of a revised Basic Energy Plan that described nuclear power as an “important baseload electricity source” and more concretely established the government’s openness to restarting off-line nuclear plants and building new ones.63 This reverses former Prime Minister Kan’s determination to take and keep all of Japan’s nuclear plants offline (a policy not supported uniformly within Kan’s DPJ government or by his DPJ successor Noda, but not as formally and emphatically discarded by them). Abe also appears buoyed by an apparent rise in nationalism and security-mindedness among the Japanese public at large. In the 2012 Lower House election that brought Abe and the LDP back to power, the LDP was not the only winner. The even more avowedly nationalist Japan Restoration Party nearly won enough seats to overtake the DPJ as the LDP’s main challenger (although both the DPJ and JRP finished similarly far behind the LDP). Maritime disputes with China over the Senkaku / Diaoyu islands and with South Korea over Takeshima / Tokdo have encouraged a spike in xenophobically tinged nationalism against these two countries, to such a degree as to prompt violent incidents against ethnic Korean residents of Japan.64 Meanwhile, nuclear-test and kinetic provocations on the part of North Korea have made Japanese citizens more amenable to the idea of a more robust defense against that country – a sentiment that Abe, with his personal history of hardline stances against North Korea, is particularly well positioned to take advantage of. And while such sentiments are nominally directed at North Korea, they may be exploited to push for advances in defense capabilities that are in practice directed at China as well (or, to echo the terms used above, the high salience of North Korean provocations helps propel securitycapability expansions that would otherwise be of low salience to the public, even though the latter might have proceeded with relatively little opposition in any case precisely because of that lower salience). 65 An observer would be forgiven for observing this policy record and extrapolating it to expect Abe eventually, in the later portions of his likely extended time in office, to push, slowly but surely, for expansion in Japan’s nuclear weapons capabilities. But it seems more likely that the opposite pattern will hold. It is precisely because Abe holds so many comparatively ambitious security policy goals that he is unlikely to push for what would be extremely ambitious steps towards establishing greater nuclear autonomy. The public-support threshold that a nuclear-expansion effort would need to clear is extremely high. In isolation, when asked in opinion polls whether one is comfortable with the notion of considering a move toward autonomous nuclear-weapons capability, Japanese citizens might be more positive than before. But in practice, public comfort with nuclear weapons would first require the public to collectively achieve comfort with at least four inter-related intermediate steps, each of which itself would constitute a major transformation: 1) Article 9 of the Constitution, through which Japan now renounces the right to wage war, would need to be amended; 2) the Three Non-Nuclear Principles (no possession or manufacture of nuclear weapons, nor permitting their introduction into Japanese territory), which are not law but have taken on the de facto weight of law (as have their counterpart Three Principles of Arms Exports noted above), would need to be abandoned; 3) the Self Defense Forces would need to be permitted to acquire offensive capabilities, thus breaking from their history of possessing only (or at least maintaining that they possess) “exclusively defense-oriented” capabilities; 4) and, finally, more amorphously and perhaps most difficult – the Self Defense Forces would need to earn widespread trust as a professional military organization, something that even the SDF’s widely-praised performance in the humanitarian assistance operation following the 3/11 disasters is still far from producing.66 Any one of these objectives would consume practically all of a Japanese administration’s political capital. Indeed, Abe has already begun to spend political capital on Constitutional revision, which in most contexts other than nuclear weapons policy would represent any administration’s crowning achievement, not simply an intermediate step. In Japan, even firmly establishing that nuclear weapons are a legitimate option would qualify as significant. The political capital involved in making significant steps toward nuclear weapons capability would simply be too great. Besides this basic budgetary limit on political ambition, one can point to other conditions that will likely discourage Abe from pursuing politically driven steps away from the nuclear status quo. Economics also plays a role. First, that Abe has been able to pursue his securitypolicy goals without debilitating legislative and public pushback thus far is largely due to the fact that his economic program was rolled out first, and, much more important, that this program has actually proven successful. This is perhaps the first time in two decades that Japanese citizens have viewed an economic upturn not as a temporary fluctuation or as artificially manufactured through government stimulus unsustainable over the long term, but, rather, as the result of systematic and durable economic policy. That said, Abe’s economic success over his first year or so of this second term is by no means guaranteed to last. If the current comparatively high economic tide were to recede, and if Abe were thereby left stranded with only revisionist security policy to his name, public patience with his priorities might quickly grow thin.67 At the same time, a nuclear weapons program (as opposed to, say, the export of nuclear technology) is itself a direct drain on the treasury, even in an economy as large as Japan’s, and, given the existence of the U.S. nuclear umbrella, is likely to be viewed by many as an extravagance.68 Finally, Abe’s recent political history, for him more than for other LDP leaders, discourages costly moves away from the nuclear status quo. More than any other LDP prime minister – again, since at least his grandfather Kishi in the 1950s – Abe has hard personal experience with the dangers of over-reliance on security policy as a signature legislative achievement. And Abe’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine and heavy-handed passage of “state secrets” legislation in December 2013 has already dealt him his first acute drop in Cabinet support. At the same time, as a well-established security hard-liner (again, by Japanese standards, at least), Abe has no need to go out of his way to prove his bona fides in this regard. If anything, Abe has a need to avoid confirming some of the public’s perception of him as an extreme hawk. If Japanese citizens were to trust any leader with taking steps away from the nuclear status quo, it would more likely be someone other than him. He has retained the support of most citizens, but he has also conditioned them to be on guard for extremism. This also applies, in a weaker form, to parliamentarians within Abe’s own LDP. The LDP’s current leaders below and beyond Abe do, as a group, focus more on defense issues than their predecessors. Ishiba Shigeru is chief among these, having been one of the few politicians in either party to have long concerned himself with defense and foreign policy issues rather than more voter-friendly domestic concerns; others include Koike Yuriko and Ishihara Nobuteru. But the LDP remains a broad center-right party, with significant portions resistant to nuclear weapons either on principle or for the expense they would entail. The LDP is also a party whose rank-and-file members are comparatively well empowered, in contrast to the DPJ’s backbenchers.69 They enjoy bases of electoral support independent of the central party apparatus and have greater ability to foment intra-party dissension. The need to avoid antagonizing parliamentarians applies more strongly, meanwhile, to the LDP’s coalition partner Koumeitou (the Clean Government Party). Koumeitou is a layBuddhist party that began as a peace-promoting member of the anti-LDP opposition. Though Koumeitou has shifted to the right over the last three decades – and, in the last decade or so, has done so precisely to make itself a palatable coalition partner for the LDP – an issue as salient and extreme as nuclear weapons might well test that party’s ability to compromise. This is likely even more true of Koumeitou’s rank-and-file voters than of its party organization and leadership – and the LDP values Koumeitou more for its ability to deliver votes to LDP candidates than for its legislators’ contributions to parliamentary majorities (with the notable exception of possible Constitutional revision, in which Koumeitou’s delegation would be necessary for the LDP to achieve super-majority support). The LDP will almost certainly regress to the mean in its vote support at the next election, at which time Koumeitou’s cooperation will become even more valuable. It should be noted that the need to rely on coalition partners to form a government and make policy is one that now applies across the political spectrum in Japan’s increasingly fragmented party system. And the more such “veto players” whose buy-in is required for policy change, the less likely policy change becomes, especially when it comes to the dramatic change that a departure from Japan’s nuclear status quo would represent.70 It should also be noted that Abe represents a particularly aggressive brand of security policymaking even within the LDP. Given his current popularity, and the fact that no national election is likely to be called again until the summer of 2016, Abe is likely to remain in office for a considerable length of time by Japanese standards, bucking the recent trend of single-year prime ministers (a trend that Abe himself kicked off, as noted above). But there is no particular reason to think that he is representative of a new breed of LDP leaders. When he is eventually replaced, the likelihood that that new LDP chief will pursue revisionist nuclear policy should grow even smaller. The LDP has always granted more deference to bureaucratic opinion. It was the precedent of such LDP deference that made the DPJ appear politically activist toward traditional bureaucratic policymakers. It is true that the notion of enhanced “leadership by politicians” (seiji shudo) had first been made by LDP administrations, pre-dating the DPJ’s rule. Some argue that the trend toward “politicians’ leadership” was originally set when Prime Minister Hashimoto first established legislation to reorganize the ministries in 1998. Abe himself during his first term in 2006-2007, sought to enhance policymaking capacity among the prime minister’s staff by increasing the number of special assistants to the prime minister (shusho hosakan) and establishing a Japanese-style national security council. However, when it comes to security policy, we should expect the LDP to concentrate its political-influence efforts on more electorally lucrative domestic sectors such as construction and agriculture, especially under future prime ministers who, unlike Abe, don’t happen to have made their political reputations on hardline security stances. Also, bureaucrats themselves may grow more willing and better able to resist the new politicization of security policymaking as time passes.

### Japan Can’t Prolif

#### Japan lacks the technical capabilities to develop the bomb anyways

Furukawa et al 12 (Katsuhisa Furukawa is former Fellow of Research Institute of Science and Technology for Society, of Japan Science and Technology Agency. Peter R. Lavoy is Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. James J. Wirtz is Dean of the School of International Graduate Studies, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, and Director of the Global Center for Security Cooperation, Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Over the Horizon Proliferation Threats. Palo Alto, CA, USA: Stanford Security Studies, 2012. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 15 July 2015. Copyright © 2012. Stanford Security Studies.)

The 2006 study also suggested that any Japanese effort to construct a nuclear weapon would confront several challenges. First, given that a fairly limited domestic reserve of natural uranium exists in Japan, it would be vulnerable to an embargo of fissile materials that could jeopardize any nuclear weapons program. Second, the Japanese scientific and academic communities tend to be populated by pacifists, despite the country’s general shift toward becoming a “normal country.” A majority of the Japanese universities and academic societies still embrace the principle of avoiding involvement in military-related research. Third, selecting the location for nuclear weapon production facilities would surely be a painstaking process for any Japanese government. The political power of local governments is expanding relative to the national government. Even the selection of a location for a radioactive waste storage site has been stalled for several decades. Local activism has been energized following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accidents. In terms of potential delivery system, Japan has the H11 A and H2 -B rockets, which could be converted into intercontinental ballistic missiles. The H2 -B launch vehicle is a two-stage rocket that uses liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen as propellant. It also has four strap-on solid-fuel rocket boosters that can be used to extend its range or payload. The satellite launch systems employed on the rockets are based on technologies that could serve as the basis of a warhead “bus,” although Japanese scientists and engineers have apparently never explored this application. Japan also has not undertaken a serious examination of a nuclear-tipped cruise missile. The Japanese military also lacks the “intellectual” and operational infrastructure needed for a viable nuclear arsenal. It has never articulated a nuclear doctrine or a unified command and control system for nuclear operations. For its part, the government also lacks a stringent legal framework to protect classified information related to a nuclear weapons program. Additionally, no effort has been made to develop an intelligence system or information protocols to support nuclear operations.

### Prolif Isn’t Destabilizing

#### Proliferation isn’t inherently destabilizing – asia specifically

Sundstrom 15 (Ian Sundstrom is a surface warfare officer in the United States Navy and holds a master’s degree in war studies from King’s College London, “An East Asian Arms Race: Does It Even Matter?” January 16, 2015 <http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/an-east-asian-arms-race-does-it-even-matter/>)

It is difficult to say whether there is an ongoing arms race in East Asia. Some take it as a given that China and the United States are engaged in an arms race, and that the U.S. is losing. Others argue that China’s increased defense spending will lead the rest of the region to follow suit, or that China’s development of MIRVed nuclear missiles will spark a regional nuclear arms race. Still others note that most of the region’s defense budgets were at 25 year lows as a percentage of GDP in 2014 while China’s defense spending continues to increase. Whatever the case may be, most observers treat the concept of an arms race in Asia as self-evidently negative. But is that truly the case? Must an arms race have negative consequences for regional security and stability? Historical evidence and logic say no. Arms races do not lead inevitably to conflict. There are two fundamental requirements before states enter into wars: capability and intent. The first comprises military forces, economic wherewithal, and demographic factors, among other components. It is the means of war, money and guns. The second is the desire to embark upon war. It consists of a grievance, opportunity, or other cause de guerre, and the belief that war is the only, or even just the best, option available to achieve the desired outcome. An arms race involves only the capability side of the equation. Looking at the historical record demonstrates that the relationship between arms races and eventual war is not cause and effect. The classic case is the Anglo-German naval buildup before the First World War. The two countries did indeed rapidly expand their navies, and in the end they did go to war, but there was no obvious intention for war between the two countries. Circumstances outside their control, separate from the arms race – a rigid alliance structure, sudden assassination, and widely-held belief in the social virtues of armed conflict – led Europe to war. Another interesting example is the interwar naval arms treaties involving the United States, United Kingdom, and Japan. Those countries actively limited their naval construction programs in the belief that naval armaments had been a factor in the rush to war in 1914 and correspondingly that preventing any change in the naval balance would relieve pressure. In the end, the treaties were broken by the Japanese because they were intent on imperial expansion and the three powers went to war. The final classic example is the nuclear arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States. In this case, a rapid arms buildup from the 1950s onward, spurred by such mistaken beliefs as the “Missile Gap” on the US side, did not result in war between the two states. As early as the 1960s, both sides had the ability to quite literally eliminate the other from the face of the Earth with their nuclear arsenals, but that did not change the situation. Neither side had any intention of engaging in either a nuclear or massive conventional war with the other. From these three examples it is clear that a simple argument that arms races lead to war is incorrect.

#### No impact to Asian prolif – allies will be responsible

Sapolsky et al., MIT Security Studies former director, 14

(Harvey and Christine Leah, “Let Asia Go Nuclear”, DOA: 12-30-15, http://nationalinterest.org/feature/let-asia-go-nuclear-10259, llc)

America’s policy of opposing the proliferation of nuclear weapons needs to be more nuanced. What works for the United States in the Middle East may not in Asia. We do not want Iran or Saudi Arabia to get the bomb, but why not Australia, Japan, and South Korea? We are opposed to nuclear weapons because they are the great military equalizer, because some countries may let them slip into the hands of terrorists, and because we have significant advantage in precision conventional weapons. But our opposition to nuclear weapons in Asia means we are committed to a costly and risky conventional arms race with China over our ability to protect allies and partners lying nearer to China than to us and spread over a vast maritime theater. None of our allies in Asia possess nuclear weapons. Instead, they are protected by what is called extended deterrence, our vaguely stated promise to use nuclear weapons in their defense if they are threatened by regional nuclear powers, China, North Korea and Russia. We promise, in essence, to trade Los Angeles for Tokyo, Washington for Canberra, and Seattle for Seoul, as preposterous as that might seem. In order to avoid such a test of our will, the United States attempts to contain China in particular, but others as well, via a conventional force buildup—the so-called pivot to Asia. We station tens of thousands of troops in Japan and South Korea, and are expanding our presence in Guam, Australia, Singapore, and the Philippines. The conventional challenge is China’s ability to deny access for US forces in or near the island chains that are our Asian allies and that at the same time guard China. As China’s military grows the access issue becomes more problematic because of China’s ability to saturate the zone with missiles and aircraft that can threaten our military presence. The Air-Sea Battle operational concept, a costly networking of missile defenses, long-range-strike capabilities and naval forces has been the US military’s response. Billions are being spent by the United States to assure our Asian allies of our will to protect them conventionally as well with extended nuclear deterrence. But there is a better, cheaper way to provide security in Asia. We should encourage our allies to acquire their own nuclear weapons. With nuclear weapons Australia, Japan and the others would have the capability to protect themselves from bullying. Nearly all of the allies are rich enough and technologically advanced enough to acquire and maintain nuclear forces. And those who are not—the Philippines, for example—lose much of their vulnerability once the focus shifts away from conventional defenses of the island chains. Nuclear weapons helped prevent the Cold War from turning hot. In Asia they can stop a conventional arms race that is forcing the United States to invest in weapons that can block the Chinese military on its doorstep, thousands of miles from our own. Let our Asian allies defend themselves with the weapon that is the great equalizer. Tailored proliferation would not likely be destabilizing. Asia is not the Middle East. Japan, South Korea, Australia, and even Taiwan are strong democracies. They have stable political regimes. Government leaders are accountable to democratic institutions. Civilian control of the military is strong. And they don’t have a history of lobbing missiles at each other—they are much more risk-averse than Egypt, Syria or Iran. America’s allies would be responsible nuclear weapon states. A number of Asian nations have at one time or another considered going nuclear, Australia for example, with tacit U.S. Defense Department encouragement in the 1960s. They chose what for them was the cheaper alternative of living under the US nuclear umbrella. Free nuclear guarantees provided by the United States, coupled with the US Navy patrolling offshore, have allowed our allies to grow prosperous without having to invest much in their own defense. Confident that the United States protects them, our allies have even begun to squabble with China over strings of uninhabited islands in the hope that there is oil out there. It is time to give them a dose of fiscal and military reality. And the way to do that is to stop standing between them and their nuclear-armed neighbors. It will not be long before they realize the value of having their own nuclear weapons. The waters of the Pacific under those arrangements will stay calm, and we will save a fortune.

### Credibility doesn’t matter

#### Perceptions of US credibility don’t spill over to cause proliferation

**Walt 15** (Stephen M. Walt, the Robert and Renée Belfer professor of international relations at Harvard University, January 6, 2015. “The Credibility Addiction.” <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:UUohn0SMU10J:foreignpolicy.com/2015/01/06/the-credibility-addiction-us-iraq-afghanistan-unwinnable-war/+&cd=4&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>)

Unfortunately, this obsession with credibility was misplaced. For one thing, a state’s “reputation” for being tough or reliable didn’t work the way most foreign-policy elites thought it did. American leaders kept worrying that other states would question the United States’ resolve and capability if it ever abandoned an unimportant ally, or lost some minor scrap in the developing world. But as careful research by Ted Hopf, Jonathan Mercer, and Daryl Press has shown, states do not judge the credibility of commitments in one place by looking at how a country acted somewhere far away, especially when the two situations are quite different. In fact, when the United States did lose, or when it chose to cut its losses and liquidate some unpromising position, dominos barely fell and its core strategic relations remained unaffected. In other words, how the United States responds to a challenge in Southeast Asia or sub-Saharan Africa tells you nothing about how it would or should respond somewhere else, and other states understood this all along. When trying to figure out what the United States is going to do, other states do not start by asking what the United States did in some conflict on the other side of the world. Instead, they ask whether it is in America’s interest to act in the situation at hand. And guess what? This implies that U.S. commitments are most credible when the American interest is obvious to all. I mean, nobody really doubts that the United States would fight like a tiger to defend its own soil, right? Exaggerated worries about U.S. credibility had a number of unfortunate consequences. They encouraged American leaders to act in places that didn’t matter, in order to convince others that it would also act in places that did. Squandering resources on marginal conflicts undermined confidence in U.S. protection, however, because it consumed resources that could have been committed elsewhere and it sometimes made a war-weary American public even less interested in far-flung foreign adventures. Ironically, misguided efforts to bolster U.S. credibility may have weakened it instead. The credibility obsession also made it easier for U.S. allies to free-ride (something they were already inclined to do), because they could always get Uncle Sucker to take on more burdens by complaining that they had doubts about American resolve. I don’t blame them for trying this ploy, but I do blame American officials for falling for it so often. In fact, had allies been a bit less confident that the United States was going to protect them no matter what, these states might have been willing to spend more on their own defense and been more attentive to Washington’s wishes. If the goal is retaining U.S. influence and leverage, what really matters is whether other states have confidence in America’s judgment. If they believe that the United States is good at weighing threats soberly and rationally, and if they are convinced that Washington can set clear priorities and stick to them, then U.S. allies can calibrate their actions with ours and will be more inclined to follow the U.S. lead. If allies and adversaries believe the United States understands what is going on in key regions and has a clear sense of its own interests, then they will know that the United States won’t be buffaloed into unwise actions by self-serving allied whining, or provoked into overreactions by enemies eager to drag us into another costly quagmire. By contrast, if American leaders panic at every sign of danger and treat minor problems as mortal threats, then other states will be less inclined to trust Washington’s views on these matters and be more inclined to follow their own counsel. When Washington goes to war on the basis of cooked intelligence, worst-case assumptions, and unsurpassed hubris, then other countries will be warier the next time we try to get them to line up alongside us. If the United States keeps throwing soldiers’ lives and billions of dollars into unwinnable conflicts, confidence in our political system’s ability to make rational decisions will decline even more. If foreign powers believe U.S. policy is driven more by domestic politics than by strategic imperatives, they’ll view us with barely veiled contempt and meddle even more in our porous political system. If foreign leaders pay close attention to the bluster and balderdash that pass for strategic debate in official Washington, they’ll have reason to wonder if the self-appointed Leader of the Free World really knows what it is doing. And of course, when they see a lengthy series of costly screw-ups (Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Ukraine, etc.), they will be more inclined to think for themselves than to trust Washington’s guidance. What I’m suggesting, in short, is that successful diplomacy depends less on endlessly reaffirming our “will” or “resolve,” and more on building confidence in the analytical capacity of the American foreign-policy community and the judgment of top U.S. officials. And that’s not surprising, either. Diplomacy is mostly about persuasion; it is ultimately about convincing others to do what we want. They are more likely to accept our recommendations when we can tell a truly convincing story, i.e., one that has the merit of being true. And that means that credibility isn’t the key to a successful foreign policy, especially when it becomes a reflexive tendency to respond to any and all challenges with threats, bluster, and the use of force. If America still wants other states to follow our lead, what really matters is judgment: analyzing issues intelligently, setting clear and sensible priorities, and being willing to rethink a course of action in response to events. New York Yankees pitcher Lefty Gomez famously said that it was better to be “lucky than good.” He was probably right, but it’s even better to be lucky andsmart. And both matter more than being mindlessly predictable. Or, to paraphrase Walt Whitman, a “foolish credibility is the hobgoblin of small minds.”